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SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA REACTION
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2010

Media Highlights

US Embassy Ankara-Turkey Media Reaction, as prepared by the Public Affairs Information Office

How the US is Playing

Jeffrey at the American Business Forum in Turkey - Hurriyet reports that Ambassador Jeffrey commented that "we support Turkey's efforts to invite investment to Turkey" and "Turkey has proved to be a trustworthy country for investments" at yesterday's well-attended launch of a new ABFT survey on trade and investment in Turkey. Semi-official Anatolian Agency quoted Ambassador Jeffrey as saying "Private sector and investments are of great importance for the improvement of commercial relations between Turkey and the US. Turkey is expected to attract more investments in the future." Expressing the US Government's support on the issue, Jeffrey said the government desires US businessmen to work together with their Turkish counterparts. Pointing to the recent global economic crisis, Jeffrey said Turkey was in a stable position despite the crisis, adding that the country is still attractive for foreign investors thanks to its accurate policies.

Greek Lobby Calls for Jeffrey Resignation - In an inside page story, Sabah reports that the American Hellenistic Institution has taken issue with Ambassador Jeffrey's recent remarks in a Sabah interview and have asked President Obama to withdraw Jeffrey from Turkey. Of concern to the Greeks are his remarks that "Turkey is a peaceful country," and one that "doesn't occupy (isgal etmiyor) its neighbors." The institute accuses Jeffrey of defending Turkey's invasion of Cyprus.

Genocide Initiative from the Parliamentarians
Mainstream Sabah reports that five Parliamentarians, under the leadership of Foreign Relations Committee chair Murat Mercan, will be travelling to the US at the weekend. Reportedly, the group will meet with their counterparts in Washington to give the message that in case of a genocide resolution approval, Turkey-US relations will be damaged immensely.

Amb. Davies in Turkey: Milliyet's Sami Kohen, as well as

English-language reports in Today's Zaman and Hurriyet Daily News, comment on the Ambassador Glynn Davies visit to Turkey. Citing a "top level American source from the IAEA," Kohen notes that "Iran is not keeping up with its IAEA promises," and that negotiations about the nuclear standoff are now "conducted as if among the deaf." Kohen predicts that the expected report in March will point the way to sanctions against Iran and that "Turkey will have to take sides."

Websites:

"Rift Develops Between Allies and Turkey Over Iran" (Hurriyet Daily News)

"Ankara, Washington singing different tune on Iran row" (Today's Zaman)

WH Spokesman on Iran: In "Harsh Warning to Iran from US," Milliyet and Sabah report that Spokesman Gibbs commented yesterday that "We've come to the end of our time and patience" with Iran.

In the Headlines

"Heated Times in Ankara" (Milliyet)
Media outlets continue to give extensive and prominent front page play of the ongoing "Sledgehammer" coup plot allegations, including actual charges made on 2/23 against two serving admirals and 5 retired senior army officers who were among the 49 originally detained. "Meeting at Army Headquarters to Discuss Serious Situation" says Islamist Yeni Safak, in reporting on an emergency

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summit of all serving army generals held in Ankara in the evening of 2/23. "Sledgehammer Tension" headlines mainstream Vatan, which notes the wide-spread speculation that some army senior officers are planning to resign. Many papers also carry excerpts from Western press analysis of the situation. Meanwhile, Turkish pundits continue to offer a polarized approach. In mainstream Hurriyet, Cuneyt Ulsever finds allegations related to Sledgehammer "go beyond imagination and are very hard to believe" while Ali Bayramoglu in Islamist Yeni Safak accuses mainstream/secular writers for "acting as coup mongers." Asli Aydintasbas in mainstream Milliyet also wonders about the accuracy of accusations against high ranking generals, and thinks the whole thing is "very mind confusing." Liberal Radikal's Murat Yetkin details the government's attempt for crisis management: "The government did not wait to take action, sending acting PM Cicek to the TGS for a meeting with General Basbug." However, he concludes, "even though both sides express each other's concerns to each other's faces, it does not mean that the crisis is over."

English dailies:

"Washington unconcerned by arrest of generals" (Hurriyet Daily News)

"EU, US back Sledgehammer investigation for Turkey's democracy" (Today's Zaman)

"Opposition CHP is unhappy that EU Parliamentarians only read 'certain' newspapers" (Today's Zaman)

President Gul Seeks to Reduce Tension Between Government, Judiciary

Today's papers and TV channels focus on President Gul's new efforts Tuesday through meetings with top justices and government representatives in an effort to reduce tension between the executive and the judiciary. According to presidential sources, Gul invited Hasim Kilic, president of the Constitutional Court and Justice Minister Sadullah Ergin for a tte-`-tte. Kilic and Ergin are also expected to hold meetings with the president Wednesday.

Al-Qaeda Criticizes and Threatens Turkey for its role in Afghanistan

All papers and TV channels report on a newly released, unauthenticated video from al-Qaeda that condemns Turkey for its role in Afghanistan. The man speaking on the video, who claims to

be Ayman al-Zawahiri or al-Qaeda's No. 2, says Turkey is committing crimes against Islam and Muslims by participating in the war in Afghanistan. CNN reported that it could not authenticate the message but that the voice was "consistent with al-Zawahiri's intonation and accent."

Iran Captures Cundullah(God's Army) Leader (Sabah)
Turkey's Islamist-oriented media and the seculars are reporting loads on the capture by Iranian forces of a wanted Iranian Sunni activist Abdulmelik Rigi who has been returned to Iran. Prominent coverage of claims by Iranian press that the US used this "terrorist" in operations in Pakistan and Iran and that "now his time is finished." Media quote Iran's Intelligence Minister in claims that the "terrorist" was given an Afghani passport by the Americans. Islamist oriented Yeni Safak notes that Iranian Intelligence Minister Haydar Moslehi claimed that Rigi went to an US base in Afghanistan 24 hours before his arrest.

TV Spotlight (CNN Turk)

Vatan newspaper web site editor Aylin Duruoglu was released yesterday after ten months detention. She was accused of being member of the terrorist organization 'Revolutionary Headquarters'

UN Drug Trafficking report mentions Turkey in the "insufficient" category and report that only 10 percent of heroin is captured by

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Turkish police as Turkey continues to become a transit route.

17 Miners were killed in a firedamp explosion in a mine in Western province Balikesir last night

Five children were given seven years prison sentence each for throwing stones to the police during PM Erdogan's visit to Diyarbakir in 2008

MHP leader Bahceli announced that his party will not give any support to the constitutional reforms proposed by the government

Some 187 children have been killed in the war in Northern Yemen since August, according to a report issued by UNICEF

Iranian President Ahmedinejad will travel to Damascus on Thursday for talks with Syrian counterpart Bashar Al-Assad

Iran's Atomic Energy Organization leader Ali Akbar Salehi says that Iran plans to build two more uranium enrichment plants at shielded mountain locations.

JEFFREY